

SON OF SANTA

A CHRISTMASY CAROL

BY SUGAR RAY DODGE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book contains two different parts. The first is the original 2007 novel **Son of Santa**. The second is a trilogy of novelettes called **Sons of Earth**. The chapters in Sons of Earth were written several months apart, in isolation of one another. However, when put together they form a unified three-part story arc.

Several geographic, historic and cultural liberties were taken during the writing both narratives. All inaccuracies and/or inappropriate representations of the New York City and Portland, Maine metropolitan areas are solely the responsibility of the author, as are any and all variations of Christmas lore presented herein.

All references and/or allusions to real world events and popular culture are intentional, except for the ones that aren't.

PART ONE

SON OF SANTA

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which,
if persevered in, they must lead. If the courses be departed
from, the ends will change."

- Ebenezer Scrooge
A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens

PROLOGUE

THE NORTH POLE

Santa Claus is Real

Sure, the story has changed a lot over the years, but all the hard facts point to the undeniable truth of his existence. People don't want to accept it, so they stop believing. But Santa still visits those who keep believing, despite what they tell their friends at school and fancy parties.

But not everybody knows the deeper secrets of the Santa Claus tale. You see, "Santa Claus" isn't really a single person; it is more of a title that is passed from father to son. It has been a Kringle family tradition for generations.

Santa himself rarely goes out on Christmas Eve anymore. There is just no way he could go to every believer in the world all in one night. Not to mention all his important CEO-like duties that have become part of his job. His regional helpers do the actually delivering. Not the stupid kind of helpers like parents or shopping mall employees though. These are top notch pilots from all over the world recruited by the Kringle family to take their sleighs and reindeer to their designated regions and handle business. In the age of modern technology and heightened national security, the Kringle family has people on payroll in every government in the world to keep their operation a *secret*. If people *knew* Santa was real, there would be no reason to *believe*. There would be no reason to have faith in him, and the purpose of his role in Christmas would be ruined.

Duh!

Son of Santa

Jack Kringle doesn't want to be the next Santa. He never wanted to be. It wasn't that he didn't believe in his family's purpose, he just had other interests. At least that's what he told people. Ever since he was born, he had been told he would be the next Santa. As soon as his old man kicked over, he would be the new man in charge. His destiny as an old fat man in a red suit had already been laid out for him, and he had always secretly resented it.

When the Kringles' private tutors started reporting oddities in young Jack's behavior, they called a secret parent-teacher conference, which is something kids always love.

"What's wrong, Jack?" asked Santa, tugging at his beard. His booming voice echoed off the marble columns in his personal study. The jolly fat man was sitting behind his lavish desk. Being the most powerful gift giver in the world had its perks,

and one of them was a damn nice study. "Your teachers are worried about your performance in your studies."

"Nosy, pointy-eared dickwads," the teen-aged Jack muttered, glaring at his cowardly teacher.

"Your mother and I have noticed you've been brooding in your dark bedroom more than usual lately. What's the matter?"

"What difference does it make?"

"What did you say, sweetie?" asked a redheaded, youthful looking Mrs. Claus, concerned for her son.

"What difference does it make if I get good grades, or if I get bad grades? The end result will still be the same, won't it?"

"Not exactly," said Santa. "If you don't study, then you won't be an intelligent, effective Santa when your time comes."

"But still Santa, stupid or not, right?"

"Not unless I don't specify you as my successor," Santa's tone turned stern. "I could just as well have Dale be the next Santa."

"No second born Kringle has ever been designated as Santa," Jack snorted. "Besides, a monkey in a red suit and an old John Denver record could be a better Santa than Dale."

"He's getting better grades than you are right now."

"That's because I just don't care anymore. If I actually did my best, there would be no doubt who is smarter and more capable," Jack replied, smugly.

"Your brother is very intelligent and loyal," Mrs. Claus defended her other son. "You both have your strengths and weaknesses."

"Yeah, Ma! And one of my weaknesses is being stuck up here with you people and no choice of what I want my life to be!" Jack snapped.

"Jack, I—"

"Put a sock in it, Ma! You don't try to get anything accomplished! You just try to avoid confrontation and make everybody feel good instead of actually getting things done!"

"Don't you talk to your mother like that, young man!" Santa pointed his finger at his son.

"Or what?!"

"Or I'll kick you ass, that's what!" Santa stood and rolled up his sleeves. He was wearing his casual wear, so beating his son senseless wouldn't be a problem wardrobe-wise.

"I'd like to see that, fat man!" Jack stood as well, and poked his father in his tub full of jelly. "I haven't seen you in the gym since ... well, ever!"

"Don't let this fool you!" Santa grabbed his flab and shook it. "These babies will still get the job done." He flexed his biceps at his son. "Let me see your skinny little girl arms!"

"I can still take you!"

"Listen to yourself," Santa was now very, very angry. "You are the biggest egomaniac the North Pole has ever seen. You have been that way ever since you were a kid! You don't listen and you only care about yourself!"

"Oh yeah?" Jack needed a stinging comeback for that one. "Well, you're FAT!"

"Everybody just calm down!" Mrs. Claus stepped between them. Jack sat back down and so did Santa.

"I'm sorry," Jack said, holding his hands up. "I didn't mean to upset everybody."

"Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry too," Santa repeated; however, neither one of them sounded like they meant it. "So the bottom line here is that you don't want to be Santa."

"It isn't that I have anything against being Santa specifically," Jack elaborated. "I just want to find my own way in life. I want to have some say in what I do with it. Is that so wrong?"

"Jack," Santa sighed, "the Kringle family was charged with the task of bringing joy to the less fortunate at Christmas. Do you really want to turn your back on your obligation to the world?"

"Don't put that on me! I never asked for that obligation! Don't I have a choice?"

"You always have a choice," Santa conceded. "What would you do?"

"I was thinking of moving to America, maybe go to college, decide what I want to do with my life, do it and get rich. You know, the American dream."

"You've been watching too much TV," Santa laughed. "I'll tell you what, if that is what you really want, as soon as you finish your studies and turn 18, I will personally make sure you get accepted into the college of your choice. But you have to get your grades up. Do we have a deal?"

Jack couldn't believe what he was hearing. Santa was actually giving him a choice to walk away from it all.

"What's the catch?" he asked, cautiously. "Is this some kind of trick to get me to do better in school, and hope I'll change my mind before I go?"

"Nope." Santa leaned back, folded his hands on his stomach and put his big, black boots up on his desk.

"Then you are going to let me do it, but you think I am going to fail, come back up here like the prodigal son with a few life lessons under my belt?"

"No, I am very sure you will be successful." Santa laughed. "Again, you watch too much television. Not everything is a feel-good after-school-special, Jack."

"Okay," Jack stood and stuck his hand out. "I'll do better in school if you get me into a decent college."

"Deal."

The father and son shook hands and things were never the same after that.

* * *

Three Years Later

Jack's 18th birthday had come and gone, and Santa had held up his end of the bargain. Strings were pulled and Jack was accepted to New York University.

Everybody was trying to convince him to stay. The elves, the magic snowmen, even the noble battalion of Polar Bear guards. Everybody had an opinion regarding his departure. Everybody, that is, except for the big man. The head honcho. The fat man in the red suit. He was mysteriously silent. And that is what

probably bothered Jack the most. But he wasn't going to let that stop him from leaving. He was packing his bright red suitcase when Dale appeared in his doorway.

"So, you're really leaving?" his brother said.

"Yeah, that's right," Jack answered. "I'm saying goodbye to this two-bit popsicle stand." He turned to Dale and said, "If you had any sense of self you would leave, too. We have lots of cousins that he could choose to be the next Santa. You're too smart for all that Christmas nonsense, anyway. You're just like me in that way."

"Thanks for the ringing endorsement," Dale rolled his eyes. "So I should just leave because that's what you're doing?"

"I didn't say that," Jack sighed and turned to face his brother. Jack and Dale were identical twins, with Jack being about twenty minutes the elder. "I'm just saying that everybody should find their own way. You should only be Santa if that's what *you* want."

"I don't *want* to be Santa. What I *do* want is whatever's best for our family. We have a sacred charge, Jack," Dale said. "It is an honor to be a Kringle. You should be proud of our family, not running away from it."

"It's not that I'm not proud to be a Kringle," Jack said back at his brother. "I am very proud of our family and its roll. I have too much respect for it to be Santa just because I happened to be born first."

"So there is no way I can talk you into staying," Dale sighed.

"That's right." Jack slung his backpack around his shoulder and picked up his suitcase. "Now if you'll excuse me, my sleigh is leaving." And with that, Jack Kringle pushed his way past his brother and out the door.

"Yeah," Dale sighed, alone in his brother's bedroom. "I'll miss you too."

To read the rest of the story, pick up *Son of Santa* by Sugar Ray Dodge on Amazon.com!